

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 02996 181057Z

22

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 OMB-01 SAM-01 IO-13 AF-08

AID-05 SCCT-01 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /092 W

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R 051613Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7012

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, SREF, PO, AO

SUBJECT: RETURNEES PROTEST FOOD SUBSIDY CUT

REF: (A) LISBON 2878 (DTG 011112Z MAY 76), (B) LISBON
2608 (DTG 221726Z APR 76)

SUMMARY: ANGOLAN RETURNEES PROTESTED GOVERNMENT CUT OF
FOOD SUBSIDIES. THE CUT HAS EXACERBATED THE
GROWING TENSION BETWEEN THE RETURNEES AND
THE GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL POPULATION. END SUMMARY.

1. FOOD SUBSIDY CUT: EFFECTIVE APRIL 30, THE SECRETARY
OF STATE FOR RETURNEES ELIMINATED THE GOP PROGRAM OF
DAILY RESTAURANT ALLOWANCES OF APPROXIMATELY SIX DOLLARS PER
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DAY TO RETURNEES FROM PORTUGAL'S FORMER AFRICAN COLONIES.

AN ESTIMATED 50,000 RETURNEES, MOST OF THEM IN THE LISBON AREA, ARE AFFECTED. SUBSIDY WILL NOT BE RENEWED UNTIL CASE-BY-CASE (100 PER DAY) REVIEWS VERIFY AN INDIVIDUAL'S NEED. ALTHOUGH THE NEW MEASURE WAS DESIGNED TO CUT WIDESPREAD CORRUPTION AND EXORBITANT COSTS, NUMEROUS NEED FAMILIES WILL BE WITHOUT FOOD SUPPORT UNTIL CASES ARE RESOLVED, A PROCESS WHICH COULD TAKE MONTHS.

2. RETURNEE REACTION: RETURNEE REACTED QUICKLY. HUNDREDS PARTICIPATED IN A SILENT PROTEST MARCH IN FRONT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING ON APRIL 30 AND MAY 4. ON MAY 3, RETURNEES SURROUNDED THE FACILITIES OF THE RELIEF SERVICE (IARN) TO PROTEST THE CUT IN SUBSIDIES. LISBON'S DAILIES HAVE GIVEN FRONT-PAGE PLAY TO RETURNEE ACTIONS AND THREATS OF VIOLENCE.

3. PROTEST TO EMBASSY: ON MAY 3 A DELEGATION OF RETURNEES SPOKE WITH EMBASSY AID OFFICER TO PROTEST THEIR PLIGHT. (THE US AID PROGRAM HAS EARMARKED 35 MILLION DOLLARS IN RETURNEE AID, 13.5 OF WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN DISBURSED.) THEY DEMONSTRATED A LEVEL OF FRUSTRATION RARELY SEEN IN MEETINGS WITH RETURNEES. THEY CLAIMED THE NEW MEASURE WOULD RESULT IN WIDESPREAD HUNGER AMONG THE AFFECTED RETURNEE POPULATION AND PREDICTED THAT VIOLENCE WOULD BE INEVITABLE UNLESS THE SUBSIDY WERE REINSTITUTED.

4. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR RETURNEES TOLD AN AID OFFICER THAT NEW MEASURE WAS "ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY" TO END CORRUPTION AND "LONG OVERDUE." HE DISMISSED THE MAJORITY OF PROTESTING RETURNEES AS "PROFITEERS" FIGHTING TO PRESERVE THEIR UNJUST PRIVILEGES. HE ADDED THAT UNLESS RETURNEE PRESSURE PERSISTS AND REACHES LEVEL DEEMED THREAT BY GOP, GOP IS UNLIKELY TO BACK DOWN FROM ITS POSITION.

5. PREDICTIONS OF INCREASED VIOLENCE: RETURNEE THREATS OF VIOLENCE ADD TO THE BELIEF THAT RETURNEES ARE TO BLAME FOR THE RECENT BOMBINGS OF THE CUBAN EMBASSY (REF B) AND COMMUNIST HEADQUARTERS (REF A). THE MOVIMENTO ANTI-COMMUNISTA PORTUGUES (MAP), A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LISBON 02996 181057Z

TERRORIST ORGANIZATION WITH ALLEGED TIES TO RETURNEES, HAS CLAIMED BOTH BOMBINGS.

6. COMMENT THE ANGOLAN RETURNEES HAVE HAD LIMITED POLITICAL IMPACT SINCE THEIR RETURN FROM OVERSEAS. THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTEMPT TO CUT BACK ON EXPENDITURES, COUPLED WITH A PREVIOUS DECISION TO MOVE RETURNEES OUT OF FIRST CLASS HOTELS, MAY CREATE PROBLEMS. THE GOP HANDLING OF THE

RETURNEE FOOD SUBSIDY ISSUE WAS INEPT. THE MEASURE HAS SERVED
TO EXACERBATE THE GROWING TENSION BETWEEN THE RETURNEES AND
THE GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL POPULATION.
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